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Source: *State Crime Journal*, Spring 2012, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 126-148

Published by: Pluto Journals

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41917774

# POWER, STRUGGLE AND STATE CRIME: RESEARCHING THROUGH RESISTANCE

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**Abstract**: Following the commission of state crimes, state officials are in the privileged position of being able to mobilize significant resources to conceal their activities. Laying siege to the fortifications which facilitate denial is a difficult, often dangerous process that can, in general, only be mounted by *movements* of resistance. Consequently, generating conceptual tools which researchers can use to strategically manoeuvre within contexts defined by denial, struggle and resistance is a pressing methodological challenge for state crime studies. To that end, the first part of this article will present an analytical framework which helps sensitize researchers to the shifting social forces that condition denial and resistance. In the second part of this article the analytical framework will be applied to an empirical case study in order to demonstrate the practical research outcomes which these shifting social forces can engender. It will be concluded that state crime researchers must work with the rhythm of struggle, using research methodologies which permit strategic action.

**Keywords**: state crime; crimes of the powerful; methodology; resistance; Bougainville

## Introduction

When organizing and undertaking criminal activities, state officials are in the privileged position of being able to mobilize significant legal, financial and human resources, to conceal their illicit practices from public scrutiny. Laying siege to the fortifications that facilitate denial is a difficult and often dangerous process which demands mass-mobilization, an extensive division of labour and considerable auxiliary support. This type of complex siege can, in general, only be mounted by *movements* of resistance. Therefore, in addition to being a force that can control state criminals (Green and Ward 2004: 186–7), struggles of resistance also offer a powerful medium for collecting and disseminating data on state crime. Consequently, from a moral *and* strategic perspective these are struggles which state crime scholars cannot remain aloof from. Generating analytical tools which researchers can use to manoeuvre within such struggles is accordingly a pressing challenge for our field.

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To that end, the first part of this article will present a relational paradigm of state crime research. This paradigm fundamentally aims to conceptualize and connect core determinations which condition struggles of denial and resistance. It will be argued that the nature of the state crime event itself is a vital determinate, as is the anticipated effects of exposure on the strategically defined interests of the state. Where denial and state interest are in eclipse, it will be suggested that the unity of the ruling power bloc and its particular administrative capacities must be carefully measured and related to the strategy, tactics, strength and class composition of those movements opposing denial. By bringing these different determinations into relation, fieldworkers can more effectively gauge the balance of forces conditioning the contested social terrain in which state crime research is situated. This analysis allows research strategy to be calibrated with power structures in the field.

In the second part of this article, the relational paradigm will be employed to analyse the social terrain that confronted the author during his fieldwork on the Bougainville conflict – a civil war which engulfed the South Pacific nation of Papua New Guinea (PNG) for most of the 1990s. Particular attention will be given to the research avenues that were opened up by an international anti-war coalition, which used a range of measures to break a complex information embargo placed on the conflict by the PNG and Australian governments. The article will conclude by enumerating a number of suggestions for advancing a strategic state crime research methodology.

## A Relational Paradigm of State Crime Research[1]

Arguably state criminality begins when a government employs political practices that exceed the normative limits upon which rule is legitimated, thus exposing the state to a significant risk of social sanction if exposed (Green and Ward 2000; Lasslett 2010a; Ward and Green 2000). In the first instance, the phenomenal nature of these political practices will be an important determinate of their public accessibility. For example, in comparison to state terrorism, grand corruption is going to generate a different set of dilemmas, which will shape the course of denial and resistance. Indeed, grand corruption is often organizationally discrete, involving officials positioned within the inner sanctums of government, while its victimizing effects can be obscured through a range of diversionary tactics (for example, blaming fiscal shortfalls on the global economic downturn). On the other hand, state terrorism is usually administered by a broad alliance of actors positioned within numerous public and private agencies. This increases the likelihood of organizational breakdown. Moreover, the illicit practices employed by terrorist states are generally deployed in social spaces that are not as easily fortified from public scrutiny. Consequently, it

may be hypothesized that the crime's phenomenal nature sets a gradient of difficulty, which will shape the practice's amenability to exposure and analysis.

Nevertheless, the amenability of state crime events can be altered through the strategic application of political force. Consequently, the state crime event must be related to the specific strategies being pursued by state managers. However, in this respect we must avoid homogeneous conceptions of state interest. Instead, the state would be better seen as a strategic field made up of competing power networks which are tied to specific governmental projects (for example, liberalism, social democracy, neo-liberalism) (see Foucault 2007, 2008). The relative clout of a power network is shaped both by their position within the state – with some networks assuming positions of particular privilege (which positions are privileged depend on the specific state) – and their capacity to win the support of dominant class fractions, thus forming a political power bloc (see Jessop 1990, 2007; Poulantzas 1978a, 1978b).

Once viewed in this light, it becomes apparent that the state crime event must be related to the strategically defined interests of *specific* power networks. It may be that a degree of exposure is in fact welcomed by certain state managers. For example, exposure could undermine the position of a rival power network (for instance, by evidencing corruption among rivals), or it may send a message to certain social groups that the state is seeking to intimidate (for instance, the extra-judicial killing of dissidents might be readily publicized in a calculated move designed to deter future dissent). However, when exposure is indeed expected to threaten the privileged position of a dominant power network within the state, or excite a domestic/international reaction which would frustrate the dominant power network's strategic aims, the desirability of hiding the state crime event will increase in proportion with the *anticipated* negative effects.

Where the negative effects of exposure are perceived as being substantial, it may be hypothesized that state managers will attempt to cordon off the event from public scrutiny. Success will hinge upon the particular constellation of legal tools and administrative resources that are available for deployment, the discipline and organizational capacity of state managers, the unity of the power bloc they are a part of, and the configuration of civil society organs supporting denial. With respect to the first factor, the appropriateness of the state's legal powers and administrative resources can only be gauged in light of the crime's phenomenal nature, and the force being exerted by resistance movements. For example, concealing a substantive campaign of state terrorism, if resisted, may demand a significant mobilization of state resources and wide ranging legal powers. There will, in all likelihood, be a need for the regulation of movement within the theatre of operations, the careful monitoring and management of media coverage, vigorous response to any legal campaign, the monitoring of human rights activists, the arrest or execution

of key opponents, a diplomatic harm-minimization strategy (if other states ask uncomfortable questions), a public relations offensive, the denial of government records to scholars and journalists; and all this is in addition to the demands of the security operation itself. Of course, in such a scenario denial presupposes that commanding state managers have the strategic vision to apply the right balance of available measures. However, it may be that state managers misread the situation and thus make fundamental miscalculations which open up a horizon of opportunities for resistance movements. Consequently, when political power is mobilized to conceal a state crime event, we must be mindful of the congruence between demands, resources and strategy.

In those instances where denial requires the mass mobilization of public officials from across a range of government agencies, coordination and discipline will become important variables. The number of officials involved, the consistency in skill-levels and personal-discipline, the strength of information management procedures and the mechanisms for multi-agency cooperation, are all factors that will shape efforts to deny. However, the technical unity of the state must be coupled with political unity. Where a ruling power bloc loses the support of key class fractions, or where rival governmental projects begin to accumulate footholds in premium state positions, efforts to conceal state crime may be critically undermined by the opportunistic actions of those seeking to dissolve the ruling power network. Furthermore, we should acknowledge the possibility that illicit state practices may incite conscientious objectors from within the ranks of the dominant power network. Therefore, efforts to deny will also depend on the state's ability to discipline, deter and control pockets of internal resistance.

Of course, denial is not determined by the state alone, support from actors situated in the earthworks of civil society can prove vital. For example, "experts" have the capacity to "independently" verify the state's version of events, thus strengthening the web of disinformation which resistance movements must penetrate. Moreover, they can also undertake rearguard offensives which marginalize state crime opponents, be it through character assassination, disingenuous "factual" critiques or by excluding critics from vital public forums (for example, mass-media outlets, conferences, edited volumes, leading journals, etc.). The depth of this support from civil society will vary depending on a number of related factors, including class structure, the organizational capacity and strategies of the competing class forces, the social practices these strategies engender, the specific institutional ensembles that have been built to facilitate practice, and the relative hostility or receptiveness of these institutional organs towards ruling governmental projects. However, even in those instances where efforts to conceal state crime are bulwarked by a broad body of actors from within the state and civil society, power is rarely applied in

abstraction from its opposite, resistance. Therefore, the determinations plotted thus far must always be analysed in relation to resistance.

Calculating the weight and effect of resistance movements is a complex task. At a minimum such a calculation must take into account the movement's class composition, the institutional pockets of opposition from which it can draw support, and the movement's capacity to employ the right balance of tactics. The first determinate, it must be noted, impacts significantly on the latter two factors. That is, a movement's class composition will predispose it to specific institutional ensembles, strategies and tactics. For instance, a resistance movement led by radical strata of the working class is going to look on with hostility at certain institutional organs and strategies which a movement aligned to capital might readily support (for example, the World Bank/IMF and their "good governance" reforms). However, whatever a movement's class composition, the institutions it can actually function through in a specific conjuncture is a vital determinate of its strength. It can shape the movement's organizational capacity, the resources they have to draw upon and the specific range of tactics materially available to them. For instance, where there exists sympathetic trade unions, church groups, NGOs, and other community organizations, supplemented by independent organs of state accountability and political parties opposed to the ruling power bloc, a range of nodal points exist through which a movement can potentially function. However, the synergy between institutional supporters is also important, the right measure of financial assistance, complemented by a range of avenues for legal and direct action can place a movement in a strong position. However, financial support without avenues for action, or vice versa, can leave a movement paralysed.

Even when a resistance movement is able to attract the support of a substantive, synergized institutional ensemble, exposing state crime remains a challenge. The exact measure of resources needed, the particular expertise required and the optimal organizational capacity, will vary with the state crime's phenomenal nature and the ruling bloc's strategy of denial. For example, exposing a campaign of land-grabbing illicitly organized by state and corporate actors will place a different set of demands on a movement in comparison to an instance of ethnic cleansing. Moreover, while a movement may, for example, have the resources and expertise to record military atrocities on the ground, exposing the policy guiding these atrocities will require quite a different set of capabilities. Therefore, the strength of a resistance movement and the appropriateness of the nodal points through which it functions, can only be determined in relation to these specific factors.

Indeed, none of the determinations sketched here can be considered in isolation; each interlinks with the other to form an organic system that generates a particular balance of forces which, depending on the conjuncture, may be favourable or unfavourable to state crime research and the control of state criminality.

Nevertheless, whatever the conjunctural balance, it is always temporal. Not only are the determinations outlined here in a process of structural fluctuation, they are also changing as agents on both sides of the struggle recalibrate their strategy to meet new challenges. Therefore, the relational paradigm cannot make predictions about the course struggle will take, nor is it exhaustive in content. However, it does nonetheless offer a broad analytical grid which can help orient researchers to the rich range of determinations that shape how accessible state crime events are to public scrutiny, which is a necessary precursor for strategic action in the field. In order to demonstrate the relational paradigm's potential, I will now employ its conceptual framework to analyse the social terrain which I confronted when conducting fieldwork on the Bougainville conflict.

## *Blut I kapsait na wasim giraun*:[2] A Case Study on Power, Resistance and State Crime Research in the South Pacific

### The State Crime Event

Perched on the north-west tip of the Solomon Islands archipelago, Bougainville forms part of Papua New Guinea's (PNG) easternmost border region. Despite its remote location, for most of the 1970s and 1980s Bougainville assumed a position of high national importance following the discovery and development of a major copper and gold deposit in the island's Crown Prince Ranges. This situation came to an abrupt end in November 1988 when customary landowners initiated a campaign of industrial sabotage designed to permanently shut the mine. When police paramilitary squads forcefully raided villages around the mine site, in violation of a peace agreement that had been brokered in early December 1988, aggrieved landowner leaders formed the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and gradually recalibrated their strategy. In April 1989, the BRA demanded Bougainville's independence and a cessation to all mining activity (Ona 1990). The national government replied using "brutal firepower", to borrow the words of PNG's Minister of State (Bougainville Copper Limited 1989).

Thousands of villagers were forced from their homes as a result of security force raids. Flying in Australian supplied helicopters "soldiers fired machine guns attached by rope, and grenades from grenade launchers (M203/M79) or simply dropped grenades into villages" (Rogers 2002: 233). Civilian areas were also shelled with 81mm mortars, which included white phosphorous rounds (Rogers 2002: 228–9). Over the course of the war such methods of attack would kill hundreds and displace tens of thousands. Some of the displaced fled into the bush and lived under the jungle canopy. Others were herded into detention camps ignominiously labelled "care centres" by the PNG government. Often squalid places, "care centres" were

routine sites of torture, sexual assault and extra-judicial killings (Gillespie 1992: Appendix 3; Interview, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary official, 2006[3]). By 1996, approximately 67,300 displaced people were held inside these "care centres" (Alley 2003: 231). Outside the centres, extra-judicial killings were commonplace. Sister (Sr) Ruby Mirinka (2004: 102) recalls, "one of the victims was a 24-year-old pregnant woman. Shot dead by the PNG soldiers, her abdomen was then cut open to remove the foetus. The dead foetus was then placed on the chest of the dead mother for all to see – as a warning."

Owing to the scale of the military operation, PNG's security forces regularly faced critical shortages in supplies, manpower and logistical support. During the early 1990s – one of the bloodiest periods in the conflict – the shortfall was met by the mine's operator Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) and the Australian government. BCL provided troops with accommodation, messing facilities, storage for ammunition, office space, clerical assistance, trucks and fuel, while Australia, through its Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), supplied arms, helicopters, advisers, air support, technical expertise and training assistance (Lasslett 2010b).

Many of the atrocities jointly authored by this coalition were witnessed by local workers, health care professionals, missionaries, pastors, journalists, politicians and teachers, social strata which possessed the skills and connections to record and transmit this information widely. As these acts were committed using equipment readily traceable to BCL and Australia, these social strata also bore witness to critical evidence which implicated the latter two parties in the atrocities. Consequently, without the deployment of measures to conceal these crimes, the events on Bougainville were vulnerable to exposure. Following the relational paradigm, we will now examine how exposure threatened to affect the strategically defined interests of the PNG and Australian states, and the particular response this threat engendered.

**Measuring the Threat of Exposure**

Both the Australian and PNG government were anxious to see the Bougainville independence movement suppressed and the mine reopened, albeit for different reasons. In PNG ruling circles it was the mine's closure which weighed most heavily on the minds of key state officials (Lasslett 2010b). Indeed, as the single most significant economic development in PNG at the time, the mine was both an essential source of revenue and a core measure of the country's investment climate (Namaliu 1995). Its permanent closure, therefore, would have far reaching economic consequences. With respect to Australia the concerns were more of a geopolitical nature (Lasslett 2010b). As the underwriter of regional stability – a role that was being instrumentalized by Australian officials in a variety of other foreign policy endeavours – the Australian government feared that the insurgency would be a potential catalyst for state failure, in which case Australia would have to assume the

considerable burden of restoring order. Consequently, for both Australia and PNG it was vitally important that PNG's Defence Force (PNGDF) was free to combat the BRA, reopen the mine and suppress the independence movement, before matters got out of hand.

It was against this strategic backdrop that the impact of exposure was gauged. Most immediately for Australian officials exposure threatened to provoke a serious domestic backlash. Indeed, even without evidence of Australian involvement, the crisis on Bougainville was proving a delicate political issue. A senior Defence official recalls: "We got more correspondence, more ministerial correspondence, complaining about the brutality of the PNGDF on Bougainville, than we did complaining about the US–Australia joint facilities, and in the 1980s the joint facility had been the big issue we had to manage publicly" (Interview, Australian Department of Defence official B, 2006). Thus officials were aware that if Australia's covert role was to be revealed the domestic repercussions could seriously impede the government's continued ability to support PNG's military operation (Interview, Australian Defence Force official, 2006). In which case the counter-insurgency effort would either collapse or PNG would be forced to look towards other regional powers to take up the slack. Neither scenario boded well for regional security or Australia's international standing.

For the PNG government exposure was not such a serious domestic threat. Indeed, a number of Ministers felt that publicizing the government's authoritative response might even help to subdue other unruly rural communities in PNG (see Justice Minister, PNG Parliament, Record of Proceedings, 2 July 1989; Foreign Minister, PNG Parliament, Record of Proceedings, 11 July 1989; Minister of State, PNG Parliament, Record of Proceedings, 2 July 1990). However, the international ripples of exposure did concern PNG state officials (Interview, PNG Prime Minister's Department official, 2006; Interview, PNG Department of Foreign Affairs official, 2006). Most immediately such ripples could lead to the untimely loss of Australian military support. Furthermore, they could also add legitimacy to the BRA's quest for independence, particularly if it could be proven that the Bougainvillean people were being subjected to a systematic campaign of state violence.

Consequently both PNG and Australia had a substantial shared interest in ensuring that the crimes on Bougainville remained concealed. Given that there was a distinct risk that Bougainvilleans would mobilize and link up with sympathetic foreign organs and actors, prosecuting this interest demanded that a range of legal and military measures be deployed. Following the relational paradigm, we will now analyse the political technologies which were drawn upon by the PNG and Australian states, the effectiveness of the bureaucratic machinery administering these efforts, the degree of support lent by civil society and the congruence of these forces with

the crime's phenomenal nature, before moving on to consider the campaign of resistance that developed in the wake of state efforts to deny.

**Blockading Bougainville**

Despite the obvious difficulties that are associated with suppressing knowledge of a punitive military campaign whose victims and witnesses numbered in the tens of thousands, working in the favour of both states was Bougainville's geography and infrastructure. As a relatively small and remote island province, movement in and out of Bougainville could be seriously curtailed through the modest application of force, while its telecommunications and information-technology systems could be paralysed by a carefully executed embargo on goods and services. The first strategic efforts in this direction came during March 1989, just before PNG's security forces launched their first major offensive. The National Executive Committee (PNG's Cabinet) banned journalists from entering the island (Senge 1989). As the most immediate organized threat to denial, the PNG government hoped that the ban would make journalists dependent on the state for information. A senior official from the Prime Minister's Department recalls, "we were trying to do the explanation here [in Port Moresby, PNG's capital]... we said there are no security force [atrocities] on the ground, the damage is being caused by the BRA" (Interview, PNG Prime Minister's Department official, 2006). Eventually certain hand-picked journalists were allowed to visit the island under military escort: "basically we told them [the media] if you want to go to Bougainville, you have to come through PNG. You have to come, you have to be checked, what are your motives for going in there?" (ibid.).

Despite the media ban a number of journalists entered Bougainville through "the backdoor" (ibid.) (usually journalists went through the Solomon Islands). Nevertheless, they did so at their own risk. One foreign reporter recalls "a 'nice' Aussie Colonel...[who claimed I risked] 'getting my legs broken' by the PNGDF for writing the real Samson murder story... I was looking for...Samson, a bus driver, badly beaten by the PNGDF. I found him in the morgue as he was identified by his family" (Email, International Journalist, 2006). The courtesy of a warning tended not to be extended to local journalists (see Layton 1992). While such measures could not completely stop journalists from travelling to the island, it certainly had the effect of deterring most from making the difficult and dangerous trip. This in turn made the media (and NGOs) more reliant on Bougainvillean and Australian activists to relay critical human rights information.

Relaying this information either personally or remotely became a serious challenge when the PNG government used its constitutionally enshrined emergency powers to place a military blockade around Bougainville during May 1990. Emergency Order No.31 warned, "all unauthorised vessels within the exclusion zone will be fired upon without prior warning" (Hriehwazi 1990). Even humanitarian aid was restricted.

Policing this "exclusion zone" was the PNGDF's naval[4] and air contingent,[5] which were both being propped up at the time by Australia's extensive DCP.

The blockade was first and foremost a military tactic designed to increase the hardships being faced by the civilian population, thus undermining any attempt by the BRA to normalize conditions on the island. However, a welcomed side benefit was that the "back door" into Bougainville was now virtually closed (Alley 2003: 232). Josephine Tankunani Sirivi recalls, "the blockade imposed by the PNG Government meant Bougainville had no hospitals, no schools, no media, no mail services or telecommunications, no imports or exports, no banks or shops. Basically, we were cut off from the rest of the world" (Sirivi 2004a: 35; see also Havini 2004: 24–5).

The island, however, could not be hermetically sealed, especially by a relatively small military outfit such as the PNGDF. Nevertheless, the cost of breaking the blockade was elevated to an extreme level by the PNGDF's shoot-on-sight policy. A former *Arawa Bulletin* journalist, Moresi Tua, recalls his personal encounter with the policy:

> We were in the Solomon Sea... The security forces intercepted our boat and they gave us a chase... They opened fire on us... When the first victim was shot, he fell back into the boat, and the rest of us, when we saw that our companion died, we jumped into the sea... We asked for mercy. We told them that we surrendered... They started picking us one by one... They were just blasting the heads off... One of them aimed at my head to blast my head off but somehow the bullet went through my shoulder. (*Islands Business Pacific*, 4/1993)

Thus, during 1989 and 1990 we see an increasingly militarized strategy being employed to seal Bougainville off from the outside world. This strategy hinged, in part, upon the state's constitutionally enshrined emergency powers. Nevertheless, lacking the sophisticated technical apparatus required to efficiently police Bougainville's borders, the government's strategy also depended upon the PNGDF's preparedness to deter blockade-breakers by adopting a shoot-on-sight policy. This mix of tactics, of course, could only shield the military's practice from critical scrutiny. Quite separate efforts were needed to conceal the policy calculations underpinning these practices.

**Securing the Helm**

The policy frameworks guiding the military operations on Bougainville were primarily discussed and disseminated at a cabinet and senior departmental level. These are some of the most fortified areas of the state. Not only are there serious criminal penalties in place for leaking information at this level in Australia and PNG, these sanctums are also manned by a cadre of experienced public officials who have been immersed in a cynical bureaucratic culture where public deception

is normalized. A senior Australian bureaucrat explains: "We spin things, the real reason for doing things. There is always an angle, which is about either denial or deviousness. This is simply what happens with PNG policy all the time" (Interview, Australian Department of Defence official A, 2006).

There is, of course, an art to this process of deception which demands meticulous organization, inter-departmental cooperation and the maintenance of discipline under pressure. For example, the Australian government consistently maintained in parliament, before the media and in academic forums that "Papua New Guinea's policy on Bougainville is an internal matter for the Government of Papua New Guinea and has always been regarded so by the Australian Government" (Foreign Minister, Australian Senate, Record of Proceedings, 8 November 1990) – in reality, this was far from the case. Even when under intense scrutiny from activists and opposition parties, Australian state officials stuck firmly to this position. PNG, of course, could not fundamentally distance itself from the hostilities like Australia. However, when evidence of suffering and abuse emerged government officials could obscure how these phenomena related to their broader political-military strategy by attributing military abuses to a "small minority" of undisciplined soldiers or indeed the BRA (see Police Minister, PNG Parliament, Record of Proceedings, 12 July 1989; Prime Minister, PNG Parliament, Record of Proceedings, 13 March 1990). Thus efforts to decipher the policy calculations underpinning the violence on Bougainville could not be based on the sanitized public pronouncements made by Australian and PNG officials.

However, it is important at this stage to acknowledge that the initial strength of state efforts to deny, subtly reflected a degree of complicity from within the ranks of the mainstream media and the academia, whose members let allegations of abuse and questionable public policy statements pass without serious scrutiny. Indeed many of the claims made on Bougainville were treated with extreme scepticism by journalists and academics (with honourable exceptions) (Watts 1999; Zale 2004). This complicity was a structural result of the complex inter-dependent relationship that had formed between regional journalists, Melanesia experts, senior state officials and major corporate actors. In a small and close-knit region (the South Pacific), all four strata rely on each other for information and legitimacy, which in turn has generated a culture of collegiality. Thus when the war broke out, Australia's High Commission turned to an eminent Pacific historian for intelligence on the rebel movement (Interview, Australian High Commission official, 2006). While as BCL faced mounting criticism in PNG and Australia, it fell back on its good relationship with two seasoned South Pacific reporters to ensure its side of the story was properly voiced in the mainstream media (Interview, Bougainville Copper Limited official, 2006).

Owing to this inter-dependency, during the war's initial stages many of the dubious statements that were articulated by state officials, were allowed to pass into the archives relatively untouched by critical commentary. Indeed, these public statements were often echoed in scholarly and popular texts. As a result a fog was created which obscured the real strategic calculations underpinning the PNGDF's operations. This fog complemented the military blockade that denied Bougainville contact with the outside world. Of course, without the legal machinery, bureaucratic resources and military hardware that PNG and Australia drew upon, these efforts would not have been possible. Moreover, denial also presupposed the judicious support lent by a range of dependants within civil society. The regional location worked in favour of both states as well. Indeed economically and geopolitically the South Pacific is of peripheral concern to the major powers, thus regional flashpoints rarely raise the eyebrows of foreign governments or the international media. This arguably made Bougainville more vulnerable to the particular mix of legal and illegal tactics employed by the PNG and Australian states.

In abstraction from a movement of resistance these multi-pronged efforts to deny state crime would have placed an almost impossible burden on any future researcher. Many stories, experiences and events would simply have been smothered from existence by the military blockade, others would have been difficult in the extreme to document in the conflict's aftermath. Moreover, without any serious public scrutiny, the misleading policy statements made by state officials would have monopolized the public record without contest, thus denying researchers any concrete fact or clue on which to orient a future study. Fortunately, however, denial did not occur in abstraction from resistance. As we will now see, a small but sophisticated anti-war coalition developed during the early 1990s, which out-manoeuvred both states to piece together fundamental dimensions of the Bougainville story. Not only did these efforts constrain the agencies perpetrating the violence, they also created a critical body of evidence on which a serious study into state crime could be oriented. On that note we will now use the relational paradigm to examine the anti-war movement which rose up and challenged the state sponsored information embargo. Following this analysis, we will examine how this transformation in the landscape of denial concretely affected the author's fieldwork experience.

**Breaking the Blockade: The Rise of the Bougainville Anti-war Movement**

While international in character, the anti-war movement found its roots in Bougainville's nascent working class. Isolated by the blockade, they were thrust into the position of being one of the few social strata left on the island with the technical capacity to pierce the embargo. Moreover, as PNG's security forces became increasingly more cavalier in their use of violence during 1989, many who were not necessarily in support of the BRA, were nevertheless sufficiently outraged to

organize against the PNG state (Havini 2004; Mirinka 2004; Miriori 2004; Zale 2004). Consequently, during the early 1990s we see nurses, doctors, pastors, teachers, missionaries, workers, and community leaders form informal activist networks, inspired by a common sense of injustice. These networks began to act as the basic framework through which Bougainvilleans could begin to distribute humanitarian aid and expose the crimes of the powerful (see Sirivi and Havini 2004).[6]

Complementing this development on Bougainville was the gradual merging of isolated pockets of opposition in Australia into a more coherent and organized anti-war movement. This movement drew on activists from a broad range of political traditions including environmentalism, socialism, pacifism, anti-imperialism and anarchism. Among their ranks were numerous veteran activists, who had been part of other major resistance movements (stretching back to the Vietnam war), thus there was a sizable body of collective experience to draw upon. Like on Bougainville these activists were united by a common moral objection to the military campaign (and Australia's role in it) (Gillespie 2009; John 2004).

Australian based activists organized themselves through a number of solidarity groups. These groups, in turn, linked up with grass roots organizations that were forming on Bougainville and the Bougainville Interim Government (BIG), a pro-independence state organ sanctioned by the BRA. The architecture of this coalition is traced by the national coordinator of the Bougainville Freedom Movement (BFM) Vikki John:

> I attended a meeting in a Newtown [Sydney] café of other activists who were keen to get the Bougainville story on the agenda nationally and internationally. It was decided that we would become the Bougainville Freedom Movement (BFM)... Other Bougainville interest groups began in Brisbane, Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Thanks to Dee Margetts of the Australian Greens, we were able to hold regular phone link-ups with these groups. We would always begin the phone conference with [the BIG's international political representative] Moses [Havini] giving an update of the situation in Bougainville. We would then hear reports of the action the various groups were planning, the humanitarian aid and medicines they had collected, the funds they had raised, the letters they had written to newspapers, the parliamentarians they had lobbied and the great many contacts they had made along the way. We staged many, many protests; some extremely memorable. (John 2004: 86)

This international anti-war coalition was supported by a diverse ensemble of organizations, including trade unions, NGOs, faith-based organizations, community groups and the Australian Greens. These organizations provided the coalition with administrative resources,[7] financial assistance,[8] humanitarian aid,[9] and technical expertise,[10] which enhanced its operational capacity considerably.

Using this institutional support the anti-war coalition began to pierce the information embargo on Bougainville through improving remote communications and increasing the movement of people between Bougainville and various international destinations. On the former front, an amateur radio enthusiast from Sydney broke the military blockade to help set up a VHF radio network. This allowed Radio Free Bougainville to transmit stories from the island (Miriori 2002). Additionally, activists on Bougainville were also radioing contacts in the West Solomons with data on military atrocities. This data would be typed up and either faxed to the BIG's international representative in Sydney or the BFM, for release to the public.

Complementing these efforts to disseminate information remotely were numerous initiatives designed to increase the movement of activists between Bougainville, the Solomon Islands, Australia and indeed further abroad. As Sirivi (2004b: 51–2) observes, these trips were precarious:

> Countless unarmed civilian boats were lost without trace... [nevertheless] a sea journey across the blockade was our only route to assistance. It was our only means of travel to and communication with the outside world. It was how we later ferried our human rights representatives to the UN and international conferences.

By breaking the blockade Bougainvillean health care professionals and human rights observers were able to personally relate their testimony to international audiences. For example, when Sr Ruby Mirinka travelled to Australia in March 1994 she provided first-hand accounts of children decimated by malnutrition, an infant dying from sepsis, girls using dirty rags as menstruation pads, women unable to have their uterus cleared following a miscarriage and more general accounts of untreated cases of asthma, pneumonia, high blood pressure, gastro-enteritis and dysentery.

Through the improved circulation of people and information the anti-war coalition, in collaboration with allied NGOs, began to produce dossiers and reports which provided more detailed and systematic overviews of the military operations on Bougainville (see Amnesty International 1990, 1993, 1997; Gillespie 1992, 1993; Havini 1995, 1996). With assistance from the trade union movement and the alternative media, these documents were widely disseminated. As a result, victims' voices were heard well beyond the immediate vicinity of the offence. Moreover, while state officials could deny or denounce the atrocities, these reports illustrated that the abuses were not only systematic in nature, but also specifically designed to humiliate, demoralize, intimidate and cajole the civilian population. Thus, as a senior PNG government official acknowledges, these reports "were very very damaging indeed" (Interview, PNG Prime Minister's Department official, 2006). He adds, "and we had to go and defend them [internationally]" (ibid.). This required an intensive international public relations campaign, which was coupled to a number of more covert tactics designed to intimidate and discredit the anti-war coalition (Interview, PNG Foreign Affairs official, 2006).

On the latter front prominent activists were violently harassed. For example, Martin Miriori and his wife Scholastica – who both ran the Humanitarian Office for Bougainville – had their home in the Solomon Islands firebombed in 1996 while they were asleep inside (Miriori 2004: 56; see also Miriori 2002). A senior PNG Foreign Affairs official admitted to me that his government was indeed responsible for this covert operation. When asked if the intention was to kill or scare the Miriori family he responded, "he [Martin] had to go one way or another" (Interview, PNG Department of Foreign Affairs official, 2006). The official also acknowledged that the Australian barrister Rosemarie Gillespie was placed on a PNGDF death list owing to her human rights work on Bougainville,[11] though he added "it was lucky she wasn't killed, as it would have looked bad for us" (ibid.).

The attacks on activists were not only physical. For example, while several attempts on Gillespie's life failed, her character was regularly called into question by the PNG and Australian states. Indeed, when on Bougainville Gillespie (2009: 104) recalls being handed a leaflet that had been dropped from a PNGDF helicopter, which read: "This is a warning to all people of Central Bougainville to beware of the illegal presence of Rosemarie Gelispy [sic] in PNG. Rosemarie is an opportunist in search of fame. She is a hypocrite who is more interested in an award for her illegal activities in Central Bougainville." These personal smears continued in Australia. In one instance a federal MP accused Gillespie of running guns into Bougainville (Member for Swan, Australian House of Representatives, Record of Proceedings, 22 October 1997). Other prominent activists received similar treatment by the Australian government (see, for example, Braithwaite et al. 2010: 84).

Whether these various accusations and characterizations were true or not (most were not), their public dissemination by "reputable" individuals and authorities tainted anti-war activists, making their collaboration with NGOs and other groups more difficult owing to fears of negative exposure (see Gillespie 2009). Moreover, these attacks also contaminated the historical records which these activists helped to produce. Indeed, when I began fieldwork on the conflict, a number of prominent scholars and journalists warned me not to rely on information collected by the anti-war coalition. These efforts did not prevent me from employing the information which had been produced through this high-risk collaboration between victims and activists. Nevertheless, rightly or wrongly, as I faced this "hierarchy of credibility" (Becker 1967: 241), I did fear that without confirmation from perpetrators, my analysis would be dismissed as reheated BRA propaganda.

**Breaching the Helm**

Despite state efforts to deter the anti-war coalition, activists complemented their work on Bougainville by laying siege to the more heavily fortified sanctums of government. Their strategic aim was to unearth fragments of data which could

illuminate the policies and relationships underpinning the military campaign on Bougainville. Given that for a considerable period of time the Australian government underwrote these military operations, concerted efforts were made to publicly expose Australia's criminogenic role. The challenge for the anti-war coalition was to locate pockets of opposition inside the state, where a small foothold could be gained.

To that end, links were established with sympathetic parliamentarians such as the independent MP for North Sydney, Ted Mack, and the Greens Senators, Lee Rhiannon, Dee Margetts, Jo Valentine and Christabel Chamarette. Using their position of political privilege these MPs and Senators posed critical questions to the government on the floor of parliament which helped to document Australia's military role in Bougainville. The anti-war coalition was also able to obtain footholds within the PNG state. However, here activists penetrated the inner sanctums of government by drawing on kinship ties and ethnic allegiances, which remain central modalities of social organization in PNG. One of the more significant leaks obtained by activists on Bougainville was a Department of Defence document which outlined the political strategy that had informed the military blockade's installation: "The government should continually push for peace talks outside of NSP [North Solomons Province], at the same time cut off further shipping, deliberately to worsen the hardships people are already facing. Simultaneously, a psychological warfare effort must go into action to exploit the situation" (Defence Intelligence Branch 1990: 14). This offered powerful proof that civilians were being deliberately targeted, and that this tactic was approved of at the most senior levels of government.

However, the anti-war coalition did not just target heavily fortified sites within the PNG and Australian states. Convinced that BCL had been intimately involved in the PNGDF's military campaign, activists in Bougainville and Australia also supported a class action which was launched against Rio Tinto (BCL's parent) by US law firm Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro (HBSS) in 2000. The case was initially organized by US lawyer Paul Stocker, who has familial links with Bougainville. However, mindful of his age and limited resources, Stocker put landowners in touch with HBSS founder Steve Berman, who agreed to take on the case. Since then activists from the anti-war movement have been involved in constructing the complaint against Rio Tinto and liaising with victimized communities. To prove the complaint, HBSS has acquired a cache of internal BCL documents. Additionally, HBSS has also obtained a series of sworn affidavits from senior PNG state officials, which evidence BCL's illicit role. Some of the most indicting affidavits were provided by senior PNGDF officers, who had withdrawn their support for the national government following the Prime Minister's decision in 1997 to contract Sandline International (a private military company) to resolve the impasse on Bougainville – this decision incited a crucial fracture in the ruling power bloc which HBSS strategically instrumentalized.

If we now take into consideration all the diverse initiatives which the anti-war coalition bulwarked, it would seem fair to suggest that through their efforts quite a considerable window was opened into the policies and practices which underpinned the criminal events on Bougainville. At first glance, this was a surprising outcome. Indeed, owing to its links with an independence movement that had definite anti-capitalist aspirations, in addition of course to its own militant membership (particularly in Australia), the anti-war movement was unable to attract support from capital or other states (the Australian government saw to this). Consequently, they lacked access to fortifications and media that could have jettisoned their cause into the public's consciousness on a mass-scale. Nevertheless, owing to the experienced activists and community workers who were involved in the coalition, the movement managed to establish strong links with a broad ensemble of allied civil society organs. As a result of this auxiliary support, the anti-war coalition was able to use its available human resources to maximum effect. Though we should not ignore, in the latter respect, the role played by individuals. The courage and determination displayed by activists in the face of state terror was crucial to the movement's success. However, success was not only a product of bold actions on the ground, the movement had a definite cerebral quality. Indeed, activists were able to pinpoint and exploit liberal political technologies in both Australia and the US to considerable effect. Though with success came heightened scrutiny and intimidation. The toll this took on the lives of those involved was in some cases extreme, but to my knowledge no activist was successfully deterred by these efforts. As a result, the flow of information did not cease, even as the war came to a close during the late 1990s. On that note, I will now trace how my own fieldwork segued with this anti-war movement.

**Researching the Bougainville War: An Autobiographical Snapshot**

I began fieldwork on the Bougainville conflict in 2005. By then the war had ended and a peace process was yielding positive results. My research strategy was straightforward enough, I wanted to begin by conducting a thorough review of the archival materials. I hoped that this would shed light on the precise range of military tactics which had been employed to subdue the rebel movement, and the state-corporate relationships that facilitated their implementation. Following this documentary phase I planned to try and learn more about the dilemmas, strategic calculations and decisions which underpinned the events on Bougainville by approaching perpetrator organizations. This was a layered strategy; without a degree of success in the first stage of the research process, the sort of probing dialogue necessary to complete stage two would be difficult.

I was mindful that the Australian and PNG states would be reluctant to open their archives to a researcher. I nonetheless requested access to a carefully delineated range

of documents relating to the hostilities. I was denied access in both jurisdictions on the grounds of national security. This was not surprising, indeed the PNG state still has tentative hopes of reopening the mine and Australia's regional leadership aspirations remain strong. Thus critical analysis of the Bougainville war would raise uncomfortable questions for both states, as well as BCL. Nevertheless, when I made contact with members of the anti-war coalition my fortunes changed.

As witnesses to the war their own testimony was powerful. However, it was the meticulous records which they had kept during the conflict, and the strategic counter-offensives that they had helped to organize, which proved critical. Indeed, archived in the front room of Sydney based activist Max Watts were human rights reports, dossiers of victim testimony, a folio of leaked documents, transcripts from parliament, press clippings, documentary footage, transcribed data broadcasted from Bougainville, etc., which I was given access to. I was also invited to Seattle by HBSS, where a case-file greeted me the length of a large conference room. I added to this critical mass of information by extracting new fragments of data from a variety of unexplored administrative records freely available to the public, such as, parliamentary inquiry transcripts and submissions, state of emergency reports, budget hearing transcripts, budget statements, and departmental annual reports.

What emerged from these sources was a fairly vivid empirical picture of a protracted campaign of state violence – underpinned by clandestine support from state and corporate allies – which used forced displacement, extra-judicial killings, torture, and a military blockade, in order to rupture support for Bougainville's independence movement. As a result, I was now able to identify a definite strategic logic underpinning the state violence, while also being conscious of the criminogenic relationship that had evolved between Australia, PNG and BCL. This meant that I could enter the second phase of the research process armed with "insider" knowledge, which I expected would allow me to delve more deeply into the policies and decisions that had underpinned the illicit practices on Bougainville. Without the shift in power brought about by the resistance movement, this tangible research result would not have been possible.

During the second phase of the research process, I made contact with numerous officials cited in the documents I had obtained during phase one. Many of these officials had retired from public service. This proved important. Although legally still bound to secrecy, it became apparent that retired officials were prepared to talk candidly about the conflict. Indeed, their testimony often contradicted evidence provided to me by those officials who remained in government. It thus appeared that the disciplinary effects of bureaucratic cultures dilute over time. However, harnessing the open posture of retired officials, presupposed that I was literate in the events as they actually occurred and not how they were represented by state officials at the time. Indeed I found that being able to cite documents and

specific covert operations in a casual manner, created the sort of intimacy needed to generate an unadulterated discussion. Thus, even as I met with retired state officials, the concrete efforts of the resistance movement were manifest in the depth of these discussions.

Consequently, neither stage of the research process could be judged in abstraction from struggle, it was always closely calibrated with the latter's arithmetic and rhythm. Indeed the crime itself, the geography of Bougainville, the vulnerability of island infrastructure, the strategically defined interests of dominant power networks in the PNG and Australian states, the latter's variable capacity to mobilize and enforce a blockade around Bougainville and Bougainville policy over different spatio-temporal terrains, the character, capacity and support garnered by the anti-war movement, the strategy and tactics this inspired, the counter-tactics deployed by the state, and the supporting role played by institutions and actors in the earthworks of civil society, as a related whole critically shaped a research process that was at first glance temporally removed from this struggle.

Consequently, through this experience it became apparent that in the field of state crime studies taking sides has both a moral *and* a practical dimension. In the former respect, allying oneself to movements that seek to expose and constrain state criminals would appear a principled approach for state crime research which aspires to a form of partisan objectivity (see Gouldner 1973; Tombs and Whyte 2002). However, this alliance also has a complementary practical advantage that extends into the heart of the research process. When state power is articulated in favour of denial, resistance becomes one of the only viable vehicles through which the voice of victims and perpetrators can be recorded and disseminated. Thus developing tools which can aid our work with movements of resistance is just as vital (if not more) to any state crime methodology as data collection methods or coding technique.[12] The relational paradigm is one modest tool designed for this purpose.

## Strategic State Crime Research: A Conclusion

Owing to the structurally inscribed position of privilege enjoyed by states and corporations, research into the crimes of the powerful engenders a different set of methodological problems in comparison to criminology's traditional subject matter, street crime. For instance, the movements that investigate, expose and resist the crimes of the powerful – on which we rely for data – tend to be positioned *outside* dominant power networks. Outmatched in resources and legal capacity, these movements fight a war of positions where organization, institutional support, mass mobilization and a capacity to exploit cleavages within ruling class circles is essential. When these movements achieve a measure of success, it is rarely without

consequence. Activists risk surveillance, character assassination, personal threats, physical attack, imprisonment and death.

This is the difficult reality of our field. Moreover, it is a reality we cannot circumvent; indeed knowledge and resistance are, in general, entwined. Therefore, I would like to conclude by enumerating six action points for advancing strategic state crime research:

1. State crime researchers must engage with and support movements that resist state criminality. Laying siege to the fortifications which shield state crime from scrutiny demands an immense division of labour, a diverse range of tactics, a well organized social network, and a preparedness to face counter-mobilizations and harassment. This task is beyond the lone researcher.
2. Where and how we participate in these movements must be informed by a theory of struggle and power. Like any social movement, resistance campaigns are complex vehicles with cleavages and contradictions that researchers must be acutely sensitive to, lest they work at counter-purposes to their ultimate goal (Tombs and Whyte 2002: 229). Thus identifying the strata within resistance movements that offer the most direct, powerful and ethical vehicle for exposing and challenging state crime is a constant challenge which must be met with theory.
3. This theory should also be used both to pinpoint potential cleavages within ruling power blocs and to identify favourable pockets of opposition, which aligned strata can strategically employ to expose and resist state crime. Indeed, when faced with enormous practical pressures, resistance movements tend to deploy tactics on the basis of immediate challenges, rather than a broader theory of the social situation. By helping to inject theory into struggles of resistance, researchers can assist and amplify the effectiveness of front-line assaults on state crime.
4. When activists are personally attacked or the credibility of their data is sabotaged, state crime scholars must develop the capacity to deploy counter-measures that can neutralize or at least weaken the effect of these tactics. In addition to the clear ethical justification for deploying these counter-measures, lodging such a defensive action will help to inoculate data from the toxic effects of elite smears.
5. In order to facilitate strategic state crime research, we as a scholarly community must have our own permanent fortifications where theory, strategies, tactics, experience and findings can be shared, bulwarked by strong action networks which can be drawn upon at critical moments. Indeed, it is commonly observed that as a criminological sub-discipline state crime studies is marginalized in terms of recognition, funding and dissemination outlets. This is not only demoralizing from a scholarly point of view, it also means that resistance movements lack a strong fortification within the university system to draw

support from. Nevertheless, like resistance movements, we too can challenge existing power-balances by strategically pinpointing opportunities, dividing the labour and taking collective-action at decisive moments.

6. As a scholarly community we must legitimize strategic state crime research paradigms by documenting and systematizing our field experience of working with resistance movements. A solid literature base will strengthen efforts to attract funding for strategic state crime research, which in turn will help to build the fortifications in which scholarly organization can take place.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments. All errors, of course, remain my own.

## Notes

1. To aid brevity the author has omitted the calculations which were employed to produce this relational paradigm. In short, it is theoretically indebted to the works of Gramsci (1971), Poulantzas (1978a, 1978b, 2008), Jessop (1990, 2007), and Foucault (2007, 2008). The author has also drawn inspiration from the state crime methods literature (see *Social Justice* 2009 Vol.36, No.3; Higginbottom 2008; Tombs and Whyte 2003), personal dialogue with scholars and activists, and his own experience researching state crime.
2. Melanesian pidgin for "the land is awash with blood".
3. All respondents have been given anonymous titles in order to protect their identity.
4. The PNGDF's naval contingent included, five pacific class naval vessels, two landing craft vessels, a combat support boat, and twelve Avon boats (PNG Department of Defence 1989, 1990).
5. The PNGDF's air wing consisted of four DC-3 aircraft, four Nomads, four Iroquois helicopters, and three Arava aircraft (PNG Department of Defence 1989, 1990).
6. The nascent rebel administration, formed in 1990, was not exempt from these efforts to expose the crimes of the powerful.
7. For example, the Australian Greens provided communications/information-technology resources, while the Waterside Workers Union helped human rights observer Marilyn Havini (1995, 1996) to publish and disseminate an important human rights report.
8. Trade unions and church groups, for instance, helped pay for Bougainvilleans to travel abroad.
9. While doctors discreetly provided activists with expired (but still effective) drugs, the NSW Teachers Federation, the South Coast Trades and Labour Council, and the Waterside Workers Union provided materials for Bougainville's schools. The groups Humanitarian Aid for Bougainville, Solomon Islands Christian Association and Family Assistance to Bougainville – Solomon Islands Christian Association helped channel the aid to Bougainville.
10. For example, unions offered to help repair a ship that was bound for Bougainville with medical aid, while NGOs such as Community Aid Abroad, Amnesty International and Aid/Watch undertook a number of important research projects.
11. This claim was corroborated by a PNGDF officer (Interview, PNGDF official, 2006).
12. Of course, none of this entails that our research on state crime should somehow strive to bulwark the theoretical assessments of illicit practices made by resistance movements (see Gouldner 1973: 56–7). Rather, the access resistance permits must be employed to improve understandings of state crime, and to enrich the theoretical debates informing resistance strategies.

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